(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and whether the matter will be taken up with Pakistani Government; and

(d) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) As per available information, 788 Indian civilian prisoners are believed to be under detention in Pakistani jails and 55 Pakistani civilians are in custody in India.

(b) to (d) The issue of early release and repatriation of civilian prisoners has, repeatedly and at all levels, been taken up with the Government of Pakistan. The issue was last raised in the Prime Minister's talks with the Pakistan Prime Minister at Lahore on February 21-22, 1999. The two Prime Ministers decided to appoint a two-member committee at Ministerial level to examine issues relating to civilian detainees and missing POWs. Official level discussions are to be held shortly to work out mechanisms for action in accordance with this principle.

Burmese protest against Minister's statement

989. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Burmese Government have lodged a protest against the Union Minister of Defence for his alleged support to the Burmese dissidents;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what is the reaction of Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Journalist Accompanying PM during Foreign Visits

990. SHRI ONKAR SINGH LAKHAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of journalists who accompanied the Prime Minister of India during each of his foreign visits in last three years, together with the year-wise details thereof;

(b) the details regarding the criteria adopted for selection of the journalists accompanyihg the Prime Minister; and

(c) whether the Government proposed to make the process transparent regarding selection of the journalists accompanying the Prime Minister and the President of India; if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The information is attached as statement (*See* below).

(b) and (c) The selection is done to include newspapers, journals, columnists, agencies and TV networks and to give the composition an all-India spread. National dailies which have a wide circulation, regional language dailies, important journals and TV networks are selected on a rotational basis to give maximum possible coverage to the visit from the foreign policy angle and from the point of view of India's policies and concerns. The editors of the concerned newspapers, journals, agencies or networks are consulted in the matter.

Statement

Year	Countries which PM visited	Total number of journalists who accompanied PM
1996	Zimbabwe and Italy	68
1997	Switzerland,	224